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ABSTRACT

Alumni attitudes concerning their college experience, present work, and present recreational activities were analyzed in relation to the time in college, using a semantic differential format. Four items were used for each type of rating, one evaluative, another activity-oriented, and two potency oriented. The evaluation dimension concerns the quality or good-bad character of the experience. The activity dimension relates to the busy or active-passive nature of the experience, and the potency dimension deals with the importance or extent of impact aspect of the experience. Mail questionnaires produced 271 usable returns, and alumni magazine questionnaires yielded 162 additional returns. Principal component analysis and varimax rotation were performed on data for the respondent groups. Findings indicate that men with earlier college experience rated their present jobs as higher in contact, excitement, importance, and self-direction. Women with more recent college experience rated their work and recreation as more potent and gave comparable high ratings to their present jobs as did the men. Men with earlier college experience rated that experience as more pleasant, exciting, important, and one in which they set the pace. It is suggested that apparently younger men and older women feel they lack power while older men and younger women feel more influencial. Explanation are offered for lower ratings of all aspects of the college experience by more recent male alumni (i.e., growth of the school, students are less prepared for college). A bibliography is appended. (SW)

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Alumni Attitudes: Men and Women's Descriptions of Their College Experience, Present Work, and Present Recreational Activities

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Abstract

Relations among the time in college and ratings pertaining to college experience, present work, and present recreation were explored. The rating items were presented in the semantic differential format. Four items were used for each type of ratings, one evaluative, another activity oriented, and two potency oriented. Six hundred names were drawn randomly from drawers of address cards for over nine thousand active alumni. Questionnaires were mailed to those alumni producing 271 usable returns. After a month, the questionnaire was published in the Alumni Magazine yielding 162 additional returns. The data for men-mail, men-magazine, women-mail, and women-magazine were subjected to principal component analysis. Varimax rotation of the men-mail, and women-mail matrices provided acceptable solutions. Orthogonal procrustes rotation was used to bring the magazine solutions as close as possible to the corresponding mail solutions. All solutions involved four components: (1) college experience, (2) present work, (3) present recreation, and (4) potency. In every solution at least one component had a loading greater than .29 for time in college, and in several cases these loadings had opposite signs for men and women.

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The purpose of this study was to explore relations among time in college and ratings pertaining to college experience, present work, and present recreational activities. Previous research (Osgood, Suci, Tannebaum, 1957) suggested that people have a tendency to rely mostly on three dimensions in describing experiences, persons, or concepts. These three dimensions have been labelled evaluation, activity, and potency. The evaluation dimension concerns the quality or good-bad character of the experience. The activity dimension relates to the busy or active-passive nature of the experience, and the potency dimension deals with the importance or extent of impact aspect of the experience.

One recent review (Kabanoff, 1980) focused on models, methods, and findings concerning the relation between work and nonwork. It concluded (p. 73): "...to study relationships between work and leisure, both spheres should be describable on some appropriate, common dimensions."

This study examined the dimensionality of evaluation, activity, and potency ratings of work, recreational activity, and college experience and the relation of these dimensions to time in college. Thus, it attempted to use the dimension identified in previous research (Osgood, et. al., 1957) in the fashion suggested by the recent review (Kabanoff, 1980).

Procedure

A one page questionnaire was developed. Four rating items in the semantic differential format were used to obtain descriptions of each of the three kinds of experience (college, work, and recreation) making a total of twelve rating items. In each of the three sets of rating items, one was primarily evaluative, another was activity oriented, and two were potency oriented. The evaluative items dealt with the pleasantness of college experience and social contact in present work and recreation. The activity items concerned excitement in all three kinds of experience, and the potency items pertained to: (1) importance of college experience and of work and learning in recreation, and (2) setting the pace in college and self-direction in work and recreation.

Consistent with the spillover hypothesis (Wilensky, 1960) and previous research (Meissner, 1971; Osgood et al., 1957; Rousseau, 1978), three dimensions were expected to account the interrelations of the ratings. These were to be an evaluation dimension, an activity dimension, and a potency dimension. Each dimension was to be related to the corresponding rating items for college experience, work, and recreational activity. Thus, each dimension was expected to be an independent aspect of spillover from one class of experience to another, and the three dimensions together were to confirm what could be called a strong form of the spillover hypothesis.

Alumni were surveyed in two ways, by mail and by magazine. Six hundred names were drawn from drawers of address cards for over nine thousand active alumni. A fixed number of names were selected from each drawer, and the choice within each drawer was random. Questionnaires were mailed to these 600 alumni together with a covering letter. This mailing produced 271 usable returns. After a month, the questionnaire was published in the Alumni Magazine with a request for responses from those who had not yet replied. This yielded 162 additional returns.

The sample was broken into four subsamples, men surveyed by mail, men surveyed by magazine, women surveyed by mail, and women surveyed by magazine. Each subsample was subjected to principal component extraction followed by varimax rotation. Solutions involving three to five components were obtained for each subsample. These calculations were done with the proc factor segment of the SAS package (Helwig & Council 1979). The solutions involving four components were most acceptable for the men surveyed by mail, and the women surveyed by mail, but the corresponding four component solutions for men and women surveyed by magazine were difficult to interpret. For this reason, orthogonal procrustes rotation was used to bring the men surveyed by magazine solution as close as possible to the men surveyed by mail solution, and the women surveyed by magazine solution as close as possible to the women surveyed by mail solution. All solutions were found using only the time in college and the twelve rating variables. Each solution was then extended to obtain loadings for two additional variables, socioeconomic level of work and volunteer work in recreation.

Results

The final component loadings for the 15 variables and four subsamples are shown in Table 1. None of the four solutions involved the expected evaluation and activity components. Thus, the study provided less evidence than had been expected for the work-recreation spillover hypothesis.

Each solution did yield a potency component. This has been coded component D in Table 1. In men surveyed by mail, this component has salient loadings for all three of the pace-setting/self-directed potency rating items. In women surveyed by mail, the corresponding component has salient loadings for both of the recreational potency rating items and for the own-boss work potency rating item.

A striking contrast between these two potency components for men and women resides in the opposite signs of the salient loadings for the time in college variable. The negative loading for men indicates that men with earlier college experience, rated their college experience, present work, and present recreation as more potent. The positive loading for women means that the women with more recent college experience rated their work and recreation as more potent.

In each solution, the other three components have their largest salient loadings limited to one of the three kinds of experience. Thus, these three components can be called the college experience component, the present job component, and the recreational contact and excitement component.

The present job components for men surveyed by magazine and women surveyed magazine both have salient loadings for the time in college variable. Moreover, these salient loadings have signs like the corresponding salient loadings on the potency components in the two subsamples surveyed by mail. The negative loading for men shows that men with earlier college experience rated their present jobs as higher in contact, excitement, importance, and self direction. The positive loading for women indicates that women with more recent college experience gave comparable high ratings to their present jobs.

In both subsamples of men, the college experience component has salient negative loadings for the time in college variable. This means that men with earlier college experience rated that experience as more pleasant, exciting, important, and one in which they set the pace.

None of the loadings for the socioeconomic level of work variable were greater than .29. Loadings for this variable, however, were .20 for the potency component in men surveyed by mail, .27 for the present job component in men surveyed by magazine, .29 for the present job component in women surveyed by mail, and .20 for the college experience component in women surveyed by magazine.

Discussion

The failure to confirm completely a strong form of the spillover hypothesis by finding evaluation and activity components with salient loadings for college experience, work, and recreation is in agreement with the weak relations found between task attributes in work and recreation in one recent study (Kabanoff, & O'Brien, 1980). Another recent investigation (Jaynes, Note 1) also failed to provide strong support for the spillover hypothesis in data concerning work motivation and participation in recreational activities.

The potency component, which does provide some evidence for the spillover hypothesis, may indicate why the locus of control variable (Rotter, 1966) has been found to be related to so many other variables reflecting aspects of human experience (Phares, 1976; Strickland, 1977). If a potency/self-direction component resides in work and recreation in both men and women, it may be a dimension of much importance in real life.

The loadings for the time in college variable which have opposite signs in the subsamples for men and women certainly fit nicely into the overall picture of recent changes in attitudes of men and women. Apparently younger men and older women feel they lack power while older men and younger women feel more influential. This is reflected in the potency components in the survey by mail subsamples, and the present job components in the survey by magazine subsamples.

Many explanations can be given for the lower ratings of all aspects of college experience by more recent male alumni. In the span of time covered by the data, the institution, in question, has gone from a small public college to a large public university. Mere passage of time may also errode negative impressions more than positive memories. Moreover, many more people are now entering institutions of higher education which may mean more recent alumni are

less prepared for higher education and/or more alienated by institutuions of higher education.

Reference Note

1. Jaynes, W.E. Leisure activities, worker motivation, and temperament in men and women. Paper presented at the meeting of the Southwestern Psychological Association, Oklahoma City, April 1980 (ERIC code number ED 188060).

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TABLE 1

Component Loadings Greater Than 29
For Four Subsamples*

Variables		Subsamples and Components (N=143, 117, 128, 45)															
		Men surveyed by mail				Men surveyed by magazine				Women surveyed by mail				Women surveyed by magazine			
		A**	B	C	D	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
Time in college		-30		45	-41	-42	-43						33		39		
College experience:	Pleasant	74				69				77		33		66		46	
	Exciting	75				81				79				81		34	
	Important	57				65			57	73				71		-35	
	Set Pace	32	38		42	42			69	49	31	-40		63		-51	42
Present work:	Social Contact		79		-30		56				80				81		
	Excitement		81				85				79				84		
	Importance		83				74				86				92		
	Own Boss				83	30	59						57		51	36	
Recreation:	Social Contact			83				77	-31			84				77	
	Excitement			85				88			36	82				75	42
	Learning		38	64				45	60		30		65			33	64
	Self-directed		57		30	-38	34		51				81				77
Socioeconomic level of work																	
Volunteer work in recreation																	

* Decimal points omitted

** A College experience component, B Present job component
C Recreational contact and excitement component, and D Potency Component